

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED:

1. A multicomponent fiber having an exposed outer surface, comprising:
at least a first component comprising a polyarylene sulfide polymer, wherein said polyarylene sulfide polymer forms the entire exposed surface of the multicomponent fiber; and
at least a second component free of polyarylene sulfide polymer and contacting at least a portion of said first component, said second component comprising a substantially insoluble polymer selected from the group consisting of isotropic semi-crystalline polyesters and polyolefins.
2. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber is mechanically drawn in a molten state.
3. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said polyarylene sulfide polymer comprises a polymer in which at least 85 mol% of the sulfide linkages are attached directly to two aromatic rings.
4. The fiber of Claim 3, wherein said polyarylene sulfide polymer is polyphenylene sulfide (PPS).
5. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said isotropic semi-crystalline polyester is selected from the group consisting of aromatic polyesters, aliphatic polyesters, and mixtures thereof.
6. The fiber of Claim 5, wherein said aromatic polyester is selected from the group consisting of polyalkylene terephthalates, polyalkylene naphthalates, polyesters derived from cyclohexanedimethanol and terephthalic acid, and mixtures thereof.
7. The fiber of Claim 6, wherein said aromatic polyester is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene terephthalate, polybutylene terephthalate, polyethylene naphthalate, and polycyclohexane terephthalate.
8. The fiber of Claim 7, wherein said aromatic polyester is polyethylene terephthalate.

9. The fiber of Claim 5, wherein said isotropic semi-crystalline polyester is an aliphatic polyester.
10. The fiber of Claim 9, wherein said aliphatic polyester is polylactic acid.
11. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said isotropic semi-crystalline polyolefin is selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, low density polyethylene, high density polyethylene, linear low density polyethylene, and polybutene, and co- and terpolymers and mixtures thereof.
12. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber is a bicomponent fiber comprising a sheath component and a core component, wherein said sheath component forms the entire exposed outer surface of said fiber and comprises said polyarylene sulfide polymer.
13. The fiber of Claim 12, wherein said sheath/core fiber is a concentric sheath/core fiber.
14. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber is an islands in the sea fiber comprising a sea component and a plurality of island components distributed within said sea component, wherein said sea component forms the entire exposed outer surface of said fiber and comprises said polyarylene sulfide polymer.
15. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber has a circular cross-section.
16. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber has a multi-lobal configuration.
17. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber is a staple fiber.
18. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber is a continuous filament.
19. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein said fiber is a meltblown fiber.
20. The fiber of Claim 1, wherein the fiber-forming component comprises greater than 50 percent by weight of the total weight of the fiber.

21. The fiber of Claim 20 wherein the fiber-forming component comprises greater than about 60 percent by weight of the total weight of the fiber.

22. The fiber of Claim 21, wherein the fiber-forming component comprises greater than about 70 percent by weight of the total weight of the fiber.

23. A mechanically drawn sheath/core bicomponent fiber having an exposed outer surface, comprising:

a polyphenylene sulfide sheath component, wherein said polyphenylene sulfide forms the entire exposed outer surface of said bicomponent fiber; and

a polyethylene terephthalate core component free of polyphenylene sulfide and contacting said polyphenylene sulfide sheath component.

24. An article comprising a plurality of multicomponent fibers, said multicomponent fibers comprising at least a first component comprising a polyarylene sulfide polymer, wherein said polyarylene sulfide polymer forms the entire exposed surface of the multicomponent fiber; and at least a second component free of a polyarylene sulfide polymer and contacting at least a portion of said first component, said second component comprising a substantially insoluble polymer selected from the group consisting of isotropic semi-crystalline polyesters and polyolefins.

25. The article of Claim 24, wherein the article is a bag filter.

26. A process for making thermal and chemical resistance multicomponent fibers or filaments, the process comprising:

separately melt extruding at least one polyarylene sulfide polymer and at least one substantially insoluble polymer free of a polyarylene sulfide polymer selected from the group consisting of isotropic semi-crystalline polyesters and polyolefins;

directing said separately extruded polymers through a polymer distribution system along separate polymer flow paths;

combining said separate polymer flow paths to form a plurality of multicomponent fibers or filaments having an outer surface and at least a first component comprising the polyarylene sulfide polymer forming the entire exposed surface of the

multicomponent fibers or filaments and at least a second component comprising the substantially insoluble polymer contacting at least a portion of said first component; and mechanically attenuating said multicomponent fibers or filaments in a fluid state.